



state senator
Joe Harrison
2005 LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Indiana Senate
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Indianapolis, IN 46204

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state senator
Joe Harrison
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Weeding Out Corruption in State Government

In 2004, newspaper readers across the state saw an extraordinary number of headlines revealing corruption in state government. In fact, years of scandal in previous administrations cost the state at least \$25 million. An appointed state examiner said we may never know the full extent of mispending.

It can be argued that Indiana state government sees no more scandal than any other state government or large business. The difference is that Indiana government, until recently, lacked any oversight whatsoever. And when those embezzled and misspent dollars belong to taxpayers, a lack of accountability is unforgivable.

For almost two years, Senate Republicans have been decrying the lack of oversight in state agencies. This year, on his first day in office, Gov. Mitch Daniels created by executive order the position of inspector general a post that 58 federal agencies, 11 states and every branch of the military already have to provide much-needed accountability. The Legislature, however, made the job permanent and gave the inspector the ability to prosecute the wrongdoings he found. Considering

that some states allow the attorney general or even the governor himself to prosecute matters of public corruption, this was not an unreasonable request.

Opposition almost killed the bill early with a walk-out, but a compromised was reached. The amended version allows an appeals court judge to appoint the inspector general or choose



an elected county prosecutor as a special prosecutor for such cases. In the end, the most important aspect of the bill is not who prosecutes the wrongdoers; it's that they are prosecuted in the first place.

Since Gov. Daniels created this position, reports to the inspector general's hotline have increased twentyfold compared to the old State Ethics Commission line, the inspector general has opened more than 50 investigations as a result of these reports, and one set of charges has been filed.

The majority of state employees are hard-working public servants, who deserve recognition. But the inspector general is a strong first step to restoring the integrity of state government, which has been tainted by the work of corrupt employees.

Fighting Meth

Methamphetamine production has become widespread in our state, and this year the legislature has proven its commitment to curbing this criminal activity.

In 2003, Indiana law enforcement seized 422 meth labs, a figure higher than any other Midwestern state, according to the Drug Enforcement Administration.

It is difficult to catch meth producers. All of the ingredients needed to manufacture meth can be purchased legally, and are relatively inexpensive. For example, an investment of \$1,000 in easily purchased ingredients can produce \$20,000 worth of meth.

This year, we passed a bill to regulate the sale and purchase of meth precursors in the hope of reducing production in Indiana. Senate Enrolled Act 444 includes a variety of measures designed to stop the production of meth by placing restrictions on the sale and purchase of drugs containing ephedrine or pseudoephedrine, commonly found in over-the-counter cold and allergy medicines.

Retailers must store such drugs in a locked display case or behind a counter that requires employee assistance. Pharmacies may place the drugs directly in front of the pharmacy counter in the line of sight of a pharmacy employee and in an area under constant video monitoring.

Customers purchasing these drugs must present identification and record their identifying information in a log book provided and maintained by the retailer.

The bill bars retailers from selling the drugs to individuals under age 18 and allows no more than 3 grams of drugs containing ephedrine or pseudoephedrine in any one transaction. It also prevents customers from purchasing more than 3 grams of such drugs in a single week.

Meth production has become a significant problem in Indiana. We have no choice but to fight back with every available weapon.

Rx FOR INDIANA

IMPROVING ACCESS TO PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

Governor Mitch Daniels has created "Rx for Indiana," a pharmaceutical patient assistance program which allows lower-income Hoosiers to receive the prescription drugs they need for free or at significantly reduced prices. Since the beginning of the program in early March, more than 37,000 Indiana residents have qualified for the program.

Nearly 60 health care, business, community and consumer groups have joined the governor to help improve Indiana citizens' access to prescription medicine. The Rx for Indiana program was developed to build upon the success of other national programs, as it links patients with information about pharmaceutical assistance programs provided by companies and the state and federal government.

Rx for Indiana provides residents access to information about more than 275 public and private prescription assistance programs that provide more than 1,800 medications. In order to take part in the program, Indiana residents must answer a few short questions to verify eligibility. The resident will then be informed of the pharmaceutical patient assistance programs for which he or she qualifies.

Rx for Indiana can save individuals thousands of dollars per year. Before the establishment of Rx for Indiana, only about one in 10 Hoosiers were taking advantage of the reduced cost medicines available. We hope that with the creation of this program, many more Hoosiers will be able to access the medications they need.

To apply for the Rx for Indiana program, visit www.rxforindiana.com or call toll-free 1-877-793-0765. The Web site is available in Spanish and English, and Spanish-speaking telephone operators are available.

Booster Seat Law Takes Effect

Last year, the General Assembly passed House Enrolled Act 1098-2004, more commonly known as the Child Restraint Bill. This bill requires children under 8 years old to sit in child restraint systems that allow the vehicle's seatbelt to work properly. The new law goes into effect on July 1 of this year.

It is important that all parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, babysitters, and others who transport children are aware of this new law.

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releases, track bills,
and learn more about Indiana laws.



LEFT: Sen. Harrison prepares for a session day by reading the bills that will be on the calendar. The Senate introduced 647 bills during this year's "long" session. Only 164 of those passed both chambers of the General Assembly.

Honoring Public Servants

Since 1801, the Indiana National Guard has served our state in countless wars, battles and statewide disasters. In fact, Indiana Guard members have served in every American war since the Civil War. Today, members of the Indiana Guard are serving overseas in Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq and several other countries.

Because of the important work of these men and women, members of the Indiana General Assembly have authored a measure to protect the Guard and their families. Senate Enrolled Act 304 extends the tuition exemption to children of National Guard members killed on state active duty. Currently, this benefit applies only to dependents of those members killed on federal active duty. This measure helps support those dependents and spouses who endure financial difficulties after losing a loved one in active duty.

The Senate believes the role of National Guard members deserves special recognition due to their increased responsibilities. Prior to Sept. 11, 2001, the National Guard helped states primarily in the aftermath of natural disasters. The group now functions as one of the state's most important homeland security tools. They devote their time, their energy and their lives to keep Hoosiers safe.

The General Assembly also passed a bill this session that requires the state police department to provide and pay for health coverage for the surviving spouse and dependent children of state police officers killed in the line of duty. From 1933 through 2003, 42 Indiana State Police officers lost their lives in the line of duty. The number of these officers who left behind survivors is unknown.

I believe these initiatives are the right thing to do. These public servants risk too much, train too hard, and work too long to go without these important benefits.

Rooting Out Voter Fraud

Secure, fair elections are essential to preserving the rights of all Americans

Voting in a fair and credible election is at the heart of American citizenship. It is the Legislature's responsibility to adopt policies that protect our representative democracy by ensuring each vote cast is valid and legal.

A group of Senate bills were introduced this year to update outmoded election laws, reinforce the integrity of voting absentee and strengthen voters' rights at the polls by ensuring their votes are secure.

Of all the reform initiatives, none may be as critical as Senate Enrolled Act 483.

SEA 483 requires citizens to show government-issued photo identification at the polls before voting. Photo IDs are required for many commonplace circumstances that Americans face every day, like renting a video or obtaining a library card. It only makes sense that a photo ID be required for something as important as voting.

In fact, many voters are surprised to learn they are not currently required to show some form of identification at the polls. It is not uncommon for a voter to arrive at the polling place and instinctively reach for a purse or wallet to retrieve an ID, only to be told it is unnecessary.

Years ago, poll workers knew the people in their precinct and had no reason to question someone's identity. Now, it is increasingly common for Election Day volunteers to live in another town or city than the one in which they are serving. The voter ID bill gives poll workers a tool to verify a person's identity. Considering recent nationwide voting problems, and some within Indiana, this

is a common-sense step to help prevent fraud.

Objections to requiring a photo ID stem from a concern that some voters cannot afford the \$9 fee needed to purchase a state ID card. The Bureau of Motor Vehicles has agreed to grant photo IDs free of charge to those who cannot pay. Residents of state-licensed nursing homes are exempt from showing identification if a polling place is located in the facility where they reside. The bill also protects the rights of those who have a religious objection to being photographed.

Voters who show up at the polls without identification will be able to fill out a provisional ballot. They then will be required to visit the county clerk or election board's office and show an ID or object on religious grounds. The bill also requires the state of Indiana to mail out notices informing Hoosiers of the new requirements before the next election.

In 2003, the BMV issued 5.6 million driver licenses and 1.4 million state ID cards.



In 2003, the BMV issued 5.6 million driver licenses and 1.4 million state ID cards. With the state's adult population being just over 4.5 million in 2000, it's hard to imagine this legislation having an adverse effect on the vast majority of Hoosiers. The voter ID initiative has been supported publicly by Secretary of State Todd Rokita, Indiana's chief election officer.

This simple change in the rules will inspire more confidence in the election process and in our state government. Legislators want to protect voters' rights and assure that every vote is counted fairly and equally.

SEA 12 — The "Code Adam" program sets a protocol for lost or missing children in certain state buildings. This initiative, on a smaller scale, is similar to the popular and successful "Amber Alert" program. **PASSED. My vote: YES**

HEA 1501— This bill establishes the position of inspector general, an employee of the governor, who works to weed out corruption. Years of scandal in previous administrations cost the state at least \$25 million; we may never know the full extent of misspending. **PASSED. My vote: YES**



2005 Brings Good News to the Ag Industry

Legislature Creates Agriculture Dept.

Agriculture is one of the largest and most important industries in Indiana. As one of the nation's leaders in a vast array of agricultural areas, it would probably come as a surprise to most Hoosiers that, prior to this legislative session, our state had no official Department of Agriculture.

Indiana was one of only four states that operated without an official Department of Agriculture. The other three – Alaska, Arkansas, and Rhode Island – come as little surprise, but our state ranks second in the nation in the amount of prime farmland, and a one-stop entity that would handle all of our agriculture issues would greatly benefit this industry.

House Enrolled Act 1008 created the offi-

cial Indiana Department of Agriculture and consolidates duties that were once scattered across numerous agencies.

The move costs Indiana taxpayers no additional money. In fact, I hope it actually saves money by merging the 10 separate agriculture boards and commissions into one large department.

The bill also changes who serves as the chief advocate for the agriculture community. Previously, the lieutenant governor automatically served as the state's top agriculture official. While most lieutenant governors, including current Lt. Gov. Becky Skillman, have performed admirably in that position, some have not had the expertise needed to carry out such important responsibilities. The passage of



ABOVE: Sen. Joe Harrison casts a vote in the Indiana State Senate. The Senate passed legislation that creates the new Department of Agriculture.

this bill allows the governor to appoint a Commissioner of Agriculture, which will allow the governor to choose the most qualified person to handle the state's agricultural dealings.

Indiana is one of the nation's top agriculture states. This new law will enable us to take full economic advantage of one of our state's traditional strengths.

BIOFUELS: Good for the Environment and the Economy

Two significant clean energy initiatives have become law.

House Enrolled Act 1032 requires state government to fuel state vehicles with agriculture-based fuels, such as biodiesel, ethanol, or gasohol, whenever possible. Biodiesel is a clean burning alternative fuel, produced from domestic, renewable resources such as soybeans. Biodiesel contains no petroleum, but it can be blended at any level with petroleum diesel. This helps improve air quality and our economy by taking advantage of resources from right here in Indiana.

Senate Enrolled Act 378 will expand the tax incentives passed during the 2003 legislative session on the production and use of Indiana soy diesel and ethanol fuels and provide additional incentives for clean coal gasi-

fication plants. This bill covers all facets of processing — from soybean crushers to oil refineries to the service stations that will supply the fuel — while growing the demand for agricultural commodities and increasing farmers' profits. Ethanol production plants cost around \$79 million to build and don't receive these tax breaks until they are making a profit in our state.

SEA 378 provides an additional \$5 million for bio-diesel production, which will be divided into \$1 million sections for the refineries, wholesale, blenders, and service stations that carry the fuel. The bill also expands the tax credit from \$10 million to \$20 million for large ethanol and soy diesel production plants. This will provide a great opportunity for both soy diesel and ethanol plants.

Additionally, SEA 378 provides tax credits for companies who build and operate integrated coal gasification power plants in Indiana. Coal gasification is the process of using Indiana's high sulfur-coal and transforming it into clean-burning energy.

Our state's use of coal has not kept up with our production. Since 1987, coal consumption in Indiana has increased by 30 percent, while Indiana's coal production has increased by only 3 percent. Over half of the coal used to generate electricity is imported into Indiana. If Indiana coal were to replace imported coal, it would add \$1.35 billion and 18,000 jobs to our state's economy.

With rising gas prices and pollution, this source of energy has great potential. The fuel is cheaper and better for our environment. The economic possibilities are fantastic.

SEA 223 — This bill allows a person to have his or her blood type printed on a license, permit, or identification card. This could help in emergency situations, as health care providers would be able to determine a person's blood type without having to run tests. **PASSED. My vote: YES**

SEA 304 — The role of National Guard members deserves special recognition due to their increased responsibilities. This bill exempts spouses and children of National Guard members killed in state active duty from paying tuition at any state educational institution. **PASSED. My vote: YES**